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ABSTRACT

In 1970, a randomly selected sample of 101 residents of the community surrounding the University of Maryland, College Park, were surveyed to determine their perceptions of campus unrest, and their responses were compared to student perceptions of the same events. Study variables were liberal-conservative self-ratings of the residents, political party identification, education, age, income, sex, race, and attitudes and behavior related to campus disruptions and the war in Vietnam. Some general conclusions were reached, but there was a great range of opinion among the College Park community residents. Based on the self-selected labels of liberal and conservatives, liberals tended to see the society and university at fault, and the conservatives tended to place the fault with the demonstrators. Younger community residents were more likely to feel that the National Guard intensified the violence and that foreign policy caused the disturbances. Older residents tended to feel that disrupters should be expelled, that the National Guard made the campus safe, and that outside agitators and spring fever caused the disruptions. A sample of 5,671 students were administered some of the same items. Students generally responded similarly to the liberal community group sample with respect to the war and to causes of the disturbances. Survey questions and response data are included. (SW)

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COUNSELING CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
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COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF CAMPUS UNREST

Michele H. Herman and William E. Sedlacek

Research Report # 4-71

The writers wish to express thanks to Anne Collins, Joseph Horowitz, Ronald Kimball, Ann Lewis and Timothy O'Connell for their help in gathering the data.

Summary

At the University of Maryland there were many rumors of community resentment of the events occurring on the College Park campus and in the town of College Park during May, 1970. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the College Park community toward campus unrest and to compare these perceptions to student perceptions of the same events. A sample of 101 randomly selected College Park residents were administered a questionnaire. Results indicated that they felt police use of force was reasonable and that there were isolated incidents of violence by demonstrators against police, and they expressed some concern about possible damage to their property. They also tended to feel that the University administration was too "lenient in handling the crisis," and that the Governor should handle demonstrations in a somewhat tough manner. The item that perhaps evoked the strongest response concerned the blocking of Route 1 (the main highway through College Park) by the demonstrators. Only 9% of the sample felt that this action was probably justified (see Table 1).

Table 2 shows that the total sample most agreed with statements that students should be encouraged to work for change in orderly ways, that "radicals and outside agitators" had caused the disturbances, and that American combat personnel should be withdrawn at a rate not endangering the government of South Vietnam. The sample disagreed most strongly with statements that any type of protest is reasonable as long as the goals are justified, that racial tension, spring fever, or domestic and economic crisis caused the disturbances, that the presence of the National Guard intensified the violence, or that military aid and troops should be withdrawn from S.E. Asia now (see Table 2).

Differences between liberals and conservatives and older and younger residents were also presented and discussed. Researchers were given a very positive reception by community residents and the long term benefits of the study may be better relations with the community and a recognition by the University and the community that they do have mutual interests and much to gain from communicating with one another.

There have been several attempts at studying campus unrest through participatory roles of college students, faculty and administrators (Petersen, 1968; Keniston, 1967; Astin, 1971; Cole and Adamson, 1969) or demographic and personality studies of these same groups (Westby and Braungart, 1966; Katz, 1967; Lipset, 1967; Flacks, 1967; Washburn, 1969; Van Arsdale et al., 1970; Schmidt & Sedlacek, 1971).

However, particularly lacking have been studies concerning community perceptions of campus unrest. Studies involving community perceptions of campus events include Astin's (1969) examination of community and institution responses to protest, but his results have dealt mainly with legalistic or disciplinary responses by university administrations. Results indicate high correlations between violent protests and arrests and indictments by civil authorities. Nonviolent tactics had no direct relationship to arrest and indictment. A study of community attitudes toward campus unrest was done by Wirthlin and Breglio (1969) and consisted of an overview of public attitudes towards campus problems in the state of California and a measure of the intensity of response to student protest among various demographic and political sub-groups. The results indicated: (1) that 81% of those interviewed agreed with the statement "Students who disrupt the orderly process of education through demonstrations should be immediately expelled," (2) the more conservative the individual's past voting pattern the more probable it was that he expressed an extreme negative attitude toward campus protest, (3) the higher the individual's level of education, the more probable it was that he expressed a less negative attitude, (4) Negroes were more tolerant of student protest. Wirthlin and Breglio concluded that student unrest seems to have created a rallying point for the more conservative elements of society.

At the University of Maryland there were many rumors of community resent-

ment of the events occurring on the College Park campus and in the town of College Park during May, 1970. However, there have been no systematic studies of community perceptions of such events, nor of community feelings toward the University. The puspose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the College Park community toward campus unrest and to compare these perceptions to previously obtained student perceptions of the same events.

It was decided that the study by Wirthlin and Breglio (1969) set a useful model to follow. For this reason, some of the hypotheses set in that study were retested to see whether the results would be equally valid in a different community, in a different geographical area, and at a different time. Hypotheses: 1. the more conservative the individual, the more probable it will be that he will feel negatively toward campus protest, 2. older residents will feel more negatively than younger residents, 3. College Park residents will generally feel negatively about student protest.

Method

Variables

The variables studied were: liberal-conservative self-ratings of the residents, political party identification, education, age, income, sex, race, and attitudes and behavior related to campus disruptions and the war in Vietnam.

Procedure

College Park has a population of about 27,000. A sample of 101 persons was selected from the telephone directory* by means of a random sampling method. Both male and female residents were included, and to maximize the likelihood of getting both sexes in the sample, an effort was made to interview residents in the evening when males were home as well as during the day

* Although past studies note that telephone owners are not representative of the public at large, it was felt that nearly all College Park residents had telephones.

when women were likely to be home. To fully assess community attitudes, an attempt was made to eliminate full time students at the University from the sample. Subjects were approached by Counseling Center representatives who explained the purpose of the study and asked them to complete an anonymous questionnaire. A 100% sample was attained by randomly selecting one alternate person if the original subject could not be contacted. Only two people refused to complete the questionnaire. Researchers were trained by means of a series of briefing sessions, and a pre-test was done which served to reduce any unforseen difficulty (such as experimenter characteristics, unforseen hostility, etc.). The primary purpose of the training session was to develop standardized procedures and to reduce variability due to researchers.

Data Analysis

Responses to categorical items were reported in percentages by total sample, age, and political ideology, and analyzed by chi-square. Responses to Likert type items were reported in means and standard deviations by total sample, age, and political ideology, and analyzed by F. While responses were quite diverse, some general statements are possible.

Results

Generally, people in the total sample had lived in College Park for three or more years, were not connected with the University, were about half home owners and half renters, were moderates, were Democrats or Independents who voted more for Nixon than Humphrey in 1968, with more than half having completed college, with a median income of about $11,000, and a median age of about 35. The sample was 91% white, and about half male and half female (see Table 1). The sample tended to get their information about the demonstration from TV and newspapers, although 16% got firsthand information. They generally felt that

the police use of force was reasonable and that there were isolated incidents of violence by demonstrators against police, and expressed some concern about possible damage to their property. They also tended to feel that the University administration was too "lenient in handling the crisis," and that the Governor should handle demonstrations in a somewhat tough manner. The item that perhaps evoked the strongest response concerned the blocking of Route 1 (the main highway through College Park) by the demonstrators. Only 9% of the sample felt that this action was probably justified (see Table 1).

Table 2 shows that the total sample most agreed with statements that students should be encouraged to work for change in orderly ways, that "radicals and outside agitators" had caused the disturbances, and that American combat personnel should be withdrawn at a rate not endangering the government of South Vietnam. The sample disagreed most strongly with statements that any type of protest is reasonable as long as the goals are justified, that racial tension, spring fever, or domestic and economic crisis caused the disturbances, that the presence of the National Guard intensified the violence, or that military aid and troops should be withdrawn from S.E. Asia now (see Table 2).

Liberal vs Conservative

Compared to conservatives, liberals (item 4) tended to: be Independents (as opposed to Republicans); feel that the police used excessive force ; feel that violence by demonstrators against police was isolated not widespread; feel that blocking Route 1 was justified; and that the Governor should handle disturbances in a somewhat tolerant manner (see Table 1). Table 2 shows that conservatives were more likely to feel that: disrupters should be expelled; the National Guard made the campus safer; national security increased with the deployment of new missiles; we must have military victory in S.E. Asia; Selective Service is a good idea; the president should be supported in all circum-

stances; and that outside agitators caused the disturbances.

Liberals, on the other hand, were more likely to feel that: National Guard intensified the violence; campus police should not wear firearms; military aid and troops should be withdrawn from S.E. Asia now; the University should not accumulate non-academic records on students; and that foreign policy, domestic and economic crisis and student frustrations with University administration caused the disturbances.

Younger vs Older Residents

Younger residents (21-30) as opposed to older residents (41-50) tended to: have lived less time in the community; be renters, be more educated; and to have viewed the disruptions first hand (Table 1). On attitude items (Table 2) younger residents were more likely to feel that the National Guard intensified the violence, and that foreign policy caused the disturbances. Older residents, however, tended to feel that disrupters should be expelled, that the National Guard made the campus safe and that outside agitators and spring fever caused the disruptions.

Discussion

Obviously there is a great range of opinion among College Park residents. It is possible to state general conclusions, but these data suggest that we cannot stereotype the attitudes and feelings of community residents. The issue which evoked the strongest reaction from residents was the blocking of Route 1. This action had the effect of hurting businesses on the street and of preventing residents from having easy access to their homes and jobs. Thus there is evidence that such an action could be counterproductive for those expressing dissent. Another potential myth that should be dispelled is that residents were "up in arms" about the disturbances. There was some concern expressed

but again a wide range of opinion was given. However, it should be recalled that the data were gathered six months after the disturbances. Feelings may have cooled in the interim. The self selected labels of liberal and conservative differentiated residents on many items in a predicted direction. It is interesting to note how a single item calling for a self appelation can so clearly differentiate two groups on other items. The liberals seeing the society and University at fault, with the conservatives placing the fault with the demonstrators themselves, seems to represent the essence of each position. Age also serves to differentiate respondents with fewer significant differences than liberal-conservative, but with the same general pattern. The fact that younger residents relied on first hand knowledge more in expressing their opinions is also interesting and may reflect a difference in life style, with older residents more content to let others tell them what is happening, while younger residents want to see for themselves more . However conservatives were more likely to view the demonstrations first hand than were liberals. Perhaps significant for future policy decisions are the opinions expressed about police intervention. The majority of the residents felt that early use of police force was unnecessary but that continued demonstrations would necessitate their deployment. However self-described conservatives and older residents felt that police should be used unconditionally. Many liberal residents felt that police should not be used under any circumstances.

Students (N=5,671) at the University were administered some of the same items one or two months earlier (Kimball and Sedlacek, 1971). Generally students were more liberal (36% vs 24%) and radical (5% vs none) and less moderate (36% vs 58%) than College Park residents. Each group contained about the same percentage of conservatives (14% vs 15%). Students generally responded similarly to the liberal College Park sample with respect to the war and to

causes of the disturbances. On the latter point, Kimball and Sedlacek (1971) found that 50% of the Maryland student body had participated in a demonstration within the last year. If we examine the general feelings of College Park residents that radicals and outside agitators caused the disturbances, we have a possible discrepancy between fact and feeling. Either College Park residents felt that 50% of the students are radical or highly gullible in following outside agitators or they are seriously misperceiving the numbers and kinds of people engaging in demonstrations. Of course, it could be that any given demonstration had relatively few participants, but over the year the total cumulated to 50%. Of course, one must also distinguish between riots and peaceful demonstrations and the connotation and definition of the word demonstration by students and community residents is not known. It should be added that the reception given the researchers was overwhelmingly positive. Most people were pleased that the University cared what they thought about such issues and 46 specifically requested results of the study. A brief initial summary and copy of the final report was sent to all those requesting one. Officials of College Park were also pleased with the study, expressing themselves directly at an open meeting on campus to which they were invited. Thus the long term benefits of the study may be better relations with the community and a recognition by the University and the community that they do have mutual interests and much to gain from communicating with one another.

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Table 1

Percent* Responses to Categorical Items**

Item	Total (N=101)	Liberals (N=24)	Conservatives (N=15)	Age 21-30 (N=37)	Age 41-50 (N=22)
	%	%	%	%	%
1. How long have you lived in College Park?					
1. Less than one year (A)	7	17	7	19	--
2. 1-3 years	33	46	27	51	18
3. 3-10 years	30	25	33	19	32
4. Over 10 years	30	13	33	11	50
2. In which category are you? (A)					
1. A business owner	2	--	7	--	--
2. A home owner	50	33	53	32	82
3. Rent a home or apartment	49	67	40	68	18
4. Other (specify)	--	--	--	--	--
3. Are you:					
1. Faculty at the University	7	8	--	5	5
2. Staff at the University (specify position)	4	4	7	5	--
3. Part-time student	3	8	--	3	5
4. Full-time student	2	4	--	5	--
5. Not connected with the University	83	71	93	81	91
4. I generally consider myself a: (L-C)					
1. Reactionary	--	--	--	--	--
2. Conservative	15	--	100	16	9
3. Moderate	58	--	--	46	77
4. Liberal	24	100	--	32	14
5. Radical	--	--	--	--	--
6. Other (Please specify)	2	--	--	5	--

* Total percents do not always equal 100 due to rounding and no response.

** Differences between groups using x^2 (.05 level) are noted after each item.; L-C = differences between liberals and conservatives and A=differences between age groups.

Table 1 Continued

Percent* Responses to Categorical Items**

Item	Total (N=101) %	Liberals (N=24) %	Conservatives (N=15) %	Age 21-30 (N=37) %	Age 41-50 (N=22) %
5. I usually consider myself a: (L-C)					
1. Democrat	39	21	40	38	45
2. Republican	19	--	47	19	18
3. Independent	36	71	13	32	36
4. Other	5	8	--	8	--
5. Not interested in politics	2	--	--	3	--
6. My family income is (estimate of your family's yearly income):					
1. $4,000 or less	4	--	--	5	--
2. $4,001 to $6,000	3	8	7	3	--
3. $6,001 to $8,000	10	8	20	16	--
4. $8,001 to $10,000	22	33	7	19	27
5. $10,001 to $20,000	50	42	40	54	68
6. $20,001 to $30,000	7	8	7	3	5
7. Over $30,000	2	--	13	--	--
8. Don't know	2	--	7	--	--
7. In the 1968 presidential election I voted for:					
1. Nixon	39	13	40	30	45
2. Humphrey	31	46	33	30	36
3. Wallace	4	--	13	5	5
4. Other (Specify)	2	8	--	--	--
5. Did not vote	23	33	13	35	9
8. In my education, I completed: (A)					
1. Elementary school	--	--	--	--	--
2. Junior High School	3	--	7	--	5
3. High school	40	29	40	32	55
4. College	31	25	47	32	32
5. Professional or Graduate School	24	38	7	32	9
6. Other (specify)	3	8	--	3	--

Table 1 Continued

Percent* Responses to Categorical Items **

Item	Total (N=101) %	Liberals (N=24) %	Conservatives (N=15) %	Age 21-30 (N=37) %	Age 41-50 (N=22) %
9. My age is: (A)					
1. 20 and under	2	--	7	--	--
2. 21-30	37	50	40	100	--
3. 31-40	22	21	7	--	--
4. 41-50	22	13	13	--	100
5. 51-60	11	13	13	--	--
6. 61 and over	7	4	20	--	--
10. I am:					
1. Male	51	54	33	46	50
2. Female	49	46	60	54	50
11. I am:					
1. White	91	88	93	92	95
2. Black or Negro	3	--	7	--	--
3. Spanish surname	2	4	--	3	--
4. American Indian	--	--	--	--	--
5. Oriental	2	8	--	--	5
6. Other (Specify)	2	--	--	5	--
12. What was your major source of (A) information about the demonstrations?					
1. Washington newspapers	24	17	13	8	27
2. Radio	17	21	--	16	27
3. T.V.	31	33	40	32	32
4. Other newspapers, magazines	1	4	--	3	--
5. First hand view	16	13	27	22	9
6. Other (specify)	11	13	13	19	5
7. Did not hear about them	1	--	7	--	--

Table 1 Continued
Percent* Responses to Categorical Items**

Item	Total (N=101) %	Liberals (N=24) %	Conservatives (N=15) %	Age 21-30 (N=37) %	Age 41-50 (N=22) %
13. From what you have seen, heard or read, was the police use of force: (L-C)					
1. Not enough	15	--	33	8	23
2. Reasonable, in view of the situation	50	42	53	54	59
3. Somewhat excessive	20	30	7	19	14
4. Greatly excessive, to the point of brutality	2	8	--	3	--
5. Don't know	13	21	7	14	5
14. What is your impression of the use of violence against police by demonstrators? (L-C)					
1. Violence by demonstrators against police did not occur	--	--	--	--	--
2. There were isolated incidents of violence by demonstrators against police	61	71	33	57	54
3. There was widespread use of violence by demonstrators against police	10	4	20	8	14
4. Don't know	25	21	47	30	23
15. How did you feel when you first heard about the blocking of Route 1 by the demonstrators? Did you feel that it was: (L-C)					
1. Definitely justified	--	--	--	--	--
2. Probably justified	9	25	--	14	5
3. Probably unjustified	23	25	7	16	18
4. Definitely unjustified	60	38	73	54	77
5. Don't know	6	13	13	14	--

Table 1 Continued
Percent* Responses to Categorical Items**

Item	Total (N=101) %	Liberals (N=24) %	Conservatives (N=15) %	Age 21-30 (N=37) %	Age 41-50 (N=22) %
16. If you can remember your opinions while the demonstrators were blocking Route 1, did you feel that:					
1. Police should be used to remove them without any offers of concession	31	4	47	24	45
2. Police should not be used if they were willing to compromise; but should be used if they insisted on staying	52	54	33	51	41
3. Police should not be used under any circumstances	5	17	--	8	9
4. Don't know	10	21	20	11	5
17. Were you at any time concerned about destruction (or damage) of any of your property?					
1. Very much concerned	7	4	13	3	--
2. Somewhat concerned	27	17	47	24	36
3. Somewhat unconcerned	22	17	13	19	32
4. Totally unconcerned	35	50	13	41	32
5. Don't know	7	8	13	11	--
18. What is your overall opinion of the way the University administration handled the crisis?					
1. Too leniently	36	8	53	27	45
2. Adequately	28	38	20	38	32
3. Too harshly	6	21	--	8	--
4. Don't know	28	29	27	24	14
19. How should the ideal public official such as the Governor handle disturbances on college campuses? (L-C)					
1. In a very tolerant manner	13	25	--	14	14
2. In a somewhat tolerant manner	31	54	13	30	27
3. In a somewhat tough manner	39	17	53	38	36
4. In a very tough manner	13	4	20	14	23
5. Don't know	2	--	7	3	--

Table 2.

Means and Standard Deviations for Likert Items*

Item	Total Group (N=101)		Liberal (N=24)		Conservative (N=15)		Age 21-30 (N=37)		Age 41-50 (N=22)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
20. Students who disrupt the orderly process of education through demonstrations should be immediately expelled.	2.41	1.37	3.23**	1.34	1.60**	0.91	2.76**	1.50	1.95**	1.36
21. Students should be encouraged to work for change in an orderly manner.	1.40	0.60	1.35	0.49	1.53	0.52	1.40	0.77	1.50	0.51
22. Any type of protest act including harming buildings is reasonable as long as the goals are justified.	4.64	0.61	4.26	0.81	4.73	0.46	4.74	0.56	4.73	0.55
23. <u>During</u> the disruptions last spring, the presence of the National Guard intensified the violence.	3.36	1.06	2.62**	1.12	3.71**	0.91	3.06**	1.14	3.73**	0.86
24. <u>After</u> the disruptions last spring, the presence of the National Guard made the campus safer.	2.51	0.97	3.10**	1.14	2.00**	1.04	2.81**	1.06	2.18**	0.96
25. Campus police should NOT routinely wear firearms on campus.	2.86	1.35	2.26**	1.42	3.20**	1.42	2.74	1.36	3.14	1.46
26. We must have victory (in SE Asia).	3.27	1.23	3.90**	1.18	2.36**	1.15	3.56	1.31	3.10	1.18
27. American combat personnel should be withdrawn at a rate not endangering the government of South Vietnam.	2.24	1.00	2.64	1.29	2.07	0.73	2.44	1.11	2.09	0.97

Table 2. Continued

Means and Standard Deviations for Likert Items *

Item	Total Group (N=101)		Liberal (N=24)		Conservative (N=15)		Age 21-30 (N=37)		Age 41-50 (N=22)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
28. Military aid and troops should be withdrawn now.	3.36	1.20	2.73**	1.35	3.67**	1.18	3.26	1.17	3.24	1.18
29. National security increases with the deployment of new missiles.	2.99	1.05	3.55**	1.06	2.73**	1.03	3.11	1.13	2.80	1.01
30. Military and defense expenses prevent us from meeting domestic needs.	2.58	1.21	2.23	1.45	2.73	1.16	2.51	1.27	2.71	1.23
31. Selective Service is a good way to maintain a standing army to protect the country.	2.83	1.23	3.59**	1.37	2.13**	1.06	2.91	1.25	2.76	1.22
32. We should support the President of our country in all circumstances.	2.91	1.35	3.73**	1.12	2.36**	1.39	3.06	1.21	2.64	1.32
33. The source of funds used for all University research should be made known to the University community.	2.45	0.98	2.59	1.05	2.07	0.83	2.37	0.97	2.76	1.04
34. The University community should know the nature of all University research projects.	2.65	1.04	2.68	1.21	2.29	0.99	2.51	1.21	2.86	1.11
35. The University administration has neither the right nor the responsibility to accumulate non-academic records on students.	2.98	1.10	2.41**	1.14	3.29**	0.91	2.80	1.39	3.16	1.01

Table 2. Continued

Means and Standard Deviations for Likert Items*

Item	Total Group (N=101)		Liberal (N=24)		Conservative (N=15)		Age 21-30 (N=37)		Age 41-50 (N=22)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
36. The disturbances at Maryland last spring were caused by foreign policy in S.E. Asia.	2.59	1.10	2.09**	1.12	3.14**	1.03	2.21**	1.04	3.05**	1.00
37. The disturbances at Maryland last spring were caused by domestic and economic crisis.	3.34	1.03	2.91**	1.16	3.79**	0.89	3.24	1.05	3.50	1.01
38. The disturbances at Maryland last spring were caused by racial tension.	3.57	0.91	3.52	0.95	3.67	1.23	3.68	0.84	3.73	0.88
39. The disturbances at Maryland last spring were caused by student frustration with administrative communication.	2.38	1.01	2.05**	1.21	3.07**	1.22	2.41	1.10	2.27	0.77
40. The disturbances at Maryland last spring were caused by radicals.	1.96	0.91	2.21	1.04	1.87	1.06	2.06	0.97	1.64	0.79
41. The disturbances at Maryland last spring were caused by outside agitators.	2.20	1.14	2.77**	1.27	1.93**	1.03	2.54**	1.31	1.95**	0.95
42. The disturbances at Maryland last spring were caused by spring fever.	3.35	1.26	3.62	1.40	3.71	1.20	3.67**	1.24	2.90**	1.34

* 1=Strongly Agree; 5=Strongly Disagree

** Significant Differences between means (Liberal vs Conservative or Younger vs Older) using F at .05 level.